

International Students in American Business Schools

Robert Joss, dean of the Stanford Graduate School of Business in California, discusses the application process for graduate programs in business administration and U.S. business schools' strategies for keeping competitive internationally, during a USINFO Web chat.

Question: Are there any possibilities to match up the cost for an MBA degree according to the economic status of the country a student comes from, or according to the economic status of the student?

Is it possible for an MBA graduate to be recruited in the United States? What are the limits and expectations?

Robert Joss: Graduate education is expensive. It is costly to deliver. Fortunately, many students are eligible for financial assistance, so I would encourage interested students to investigate the availability of such aid as a way to ameliorate the cost of studying in this country.

Yes, it is possible to be recruited in the United States—but this will also require the graduate to obtain the necessary work visa in order to remain in the country. It is best to investigate the feasibility of such a visa with a prospective employer during the interview process.

In the developing world, not all MBAs find jobs. Would you subscribe to the view that a degree in IT holds better prospects for landing a job?

My view is that the world has many, many more management jobs than it has IT jobs—so I believe the MBA, as a degree which covers a basic and broad body of knowledge relevant to general management—is probably better at generating job prospects over the long run. Perhaps the difficulty you have seen is due more to employer unfamiliarity with what the applicant actually can do for that employer.

Does your school offer any financial

aid for foreign students? If yes, how can we apply for it?

Our school does offer financial aid, and about three-fourths of all our students receive some amount of financial aid. Many American business schools have some type of financial aid, and you should investigate that when applying to any school. But first you have to gain admission to the school, then you can investigate the availability of financial aid.

How can I participate in this program? Where do I have to submit the necessary documentation? Are the MBA courses provided with scholarships?

You need to apply to each university separately. Decide first which university program might best meet your needs. Each university that has a business school (and there are hundreds of them in America) maintains a Web site where you can learn all about that program. There are also some general Web sites, such as the one maintained by the Graduate Management Admission Council (www.gmac.com/gmac), which provide summarized information about many, many schools. Once you have selected a few schools of possible interest to you, then you can investigate whether they have scholarship funds available.

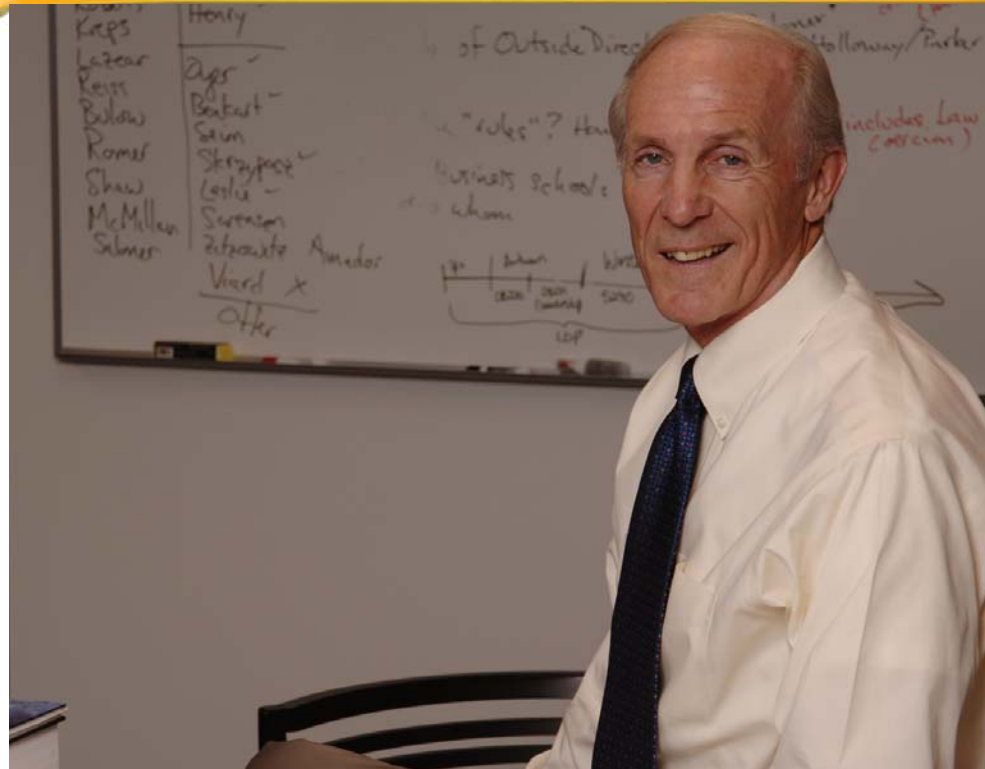
For more information:

Stanford Graduate School of Business

<http://www.gsb.stanford.edu/>

Stanford GSB and India exchange program

<http://www.gsb.stanford.edu/news/headlines/SAIL.html>



What undergraduate degree do you feel is most helpful for an MBA?

We admit people to Stanford with a tremendous diversity of undergraduate degrees. I would find it difficult to specify any one as “most helpful.” Our most common undergraduate degree holders come from engineering and economics—which tells you what the applicants think is useful. But business people everywhere tell me liberal arts, humanities, philosophy, psychology are just as important as economics and engineering or basic sciences or mathematics.

The most helpful thing is for an undergraduate to develop sound analytical thinking and good communication skills, and to learn how to apply them in everyday work and study.

As an overseas educational adviser, we see a great many students that do not yet have work

experience, but are still interested in pursuing an MBA program. What other experiences could be considered relevant that are outside the scope of practical work experience?

At Stanford we are open to admit students right out of an undergraduate program. But we do look for experience, because experience helps us to evaluate what the applicant is capable of doing by seeing what he or she has actually done—and not just what the applicant knows or says he or she can do. Experience can be gained and demonstrated in many settings—not just in a work environment. Within school, there are many opportunities for leadership and organizational experience. In extracurricular activities, student government, housing associations, summer jobs, part-time work—there are many opportunities to demonstrate the acceptance of responsibility, the

application of knowledge to problem solving, and the ability to influence others.

It seems to me that the skills you need to get a job and the skills you need to do a good job five years later are sometimes not compatible. How do you address that at Stanford?

We address this at Stanford by focusing on learning how to think for yourself and learning how to continue learning (especially learning from on-the-job experience) throughout your professional life. We do this by emphasizing the foundations and functions of business, so that our students take away solid theories, frameworks, and analytical techniques of life-lasting value. Then to help with that first job, we offer workshops and coaching in preparing for interviews, which focus on those skills that are important to that first job within an organization.

How would you contrast the MBA degree with other graduate business programs? Students can often find more research assistantships available in other business programs such as Master of Arts or Master of Science.

I think any graduate study in business and management is very helpful to future career satisfaction. The important thing is to acquire familiarity with the body of knowledge that informs one about the critical areas—about economies, markets, organizations, individuals within organizations, and the critical issues involved in the effective performance of organizations. This could be an MBA program like ours, but it could also be attainable within an M.A. or M.S. program. My advice would be to investigate just what is covered and whether a student will obtain the necessary breadth and depth of knowledge to prepare for managerial life.

What is your philosophy on the MBA rankings?

There is too much focus on rankings. The key is to find the school that is best for you, the applicant; not what some publication thinks.

Please share your views on this article. Write to editorspan@state.gov